(b) if so, the details of such officers and the action taken by Government in this regard to spot out those corrupt officers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) and (b) Two BSF personnel, allegedly involved in smuggling in R.S. Pura Sector, Jammu and Kashmir, have been apprehended and handed over to the Police for further Investigations. They have been placed under deemed suspension with effect from 03.04.2007.

Measures to improve Indo-Pak trade

*351. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Pakistan had taken a host of measures in August, 2007 to improve trade relations and set a $ 10 billion bilateral trade target by 2010;

(b) whether India has now plans to prune its list of 884 sensitive items so as to expand trade with Pakistan;

(c) if so, the details of expansion/opening of gates by India for more Pak goods;

(d) whether Indian trade officials, however, feel that a positive list policy is in gross violation of South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA); and

(e) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir. Both India and Pakistan have taken several measures to improve trade relations but no target has been fixed. Some of these initiatives are as follows:

i. Both sides have constituted a Joint Working Group (JWG) to discuss the issue of Joint Registration of Basmati Rice and this JWG is scheduled to meet on 15-16 April, 2008 in New Delhi.

ii. Decided to facilitate tea export from India to Pakistan through rail.

iii. Pakistan is considering the request of India for expansion of its importable items from India.

iv. Both sides decided to facilitate holding of exhibitions in each other country.

v. A Pakistani delegation visited India to explore the possibility of cooperation in the field of IT-enabled telemedicine.

vi. A Memorandum of Understanding on Assistance of Mutual Cooperation in Capital markets has been signed between both sides in January 2008.

vii. India has shared a Concept Paper with the Pakistan on Export Credit Guarantee Corporation.

viii. Both sides briefed about the respective status and plan of action for the proposed Integrated Check-post at Attari-Wagah on either side.

ix. Export of cement from Pakistan was operationalised.

(b) No, Sir. However, during the third meeting of the SAFTA Committee of Experts (COE) held on 1-2 March 2008 in New Delhi, all member countries of SAFTA have agreed in principle to prune their Sensitive Lists.

(c) During the Composite dialogue both India and Pakistan agreed to explore the possibility of opening the second gate at Attari for movement of Bilateral trade.

(d) and (e) Pakistan's positive list policy is in violation of the spirit of SAFTA and contrary to the provisions of the Agreement. India has been protesting against Pakistan's conditional implementation amounting to non-cimpliance of SAFTA in relevant fora.

Crops damages due to rains in Tamil Nadu

*352. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that incessant rains claimed many lives and caused an extensive damage to standing crops in Tamil Nadu recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the number of acres of crops including paddy, cotton and other crops damaged due to rains; and

(c) the details of the assistance provided by the Centre to the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI RADHIKA V. SELVI): (a) to (c) According to the memorandum sent by the Government of Tamil Nadu, heavy rains resulted in the loss of 24 human lives and caused extensive damage to 3.91 lakh ha. of standing crops including paddy (0.44 lakh ha), pulses & grams (2.81 lakh ha), horticulture (0.27 lakh ha) and other crops (0.39 lakh ha.).

2. The State Governments are primarily responsible for undertaking relief measures in the wake of natural calamities. The Government of India supplements the efforts of the State Governments by providing logistic and financial support. Financial assistance in the wake of natural calamities is provided to States through the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF), allocation for which is made to various States based on the recommendations of the successive Finance Commissions. CRF is supplemented by the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) in cases of calamities of a severe nature after following the laid down procedure.

3. To ensure ready availability of funds with the States to undertake rescue and relief operations in the wake of natural calamities, a Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) has been constituted for each State, which is contributed by Government of India and the State Governments in the ratio of 75: 25. Under the scheme of Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) State Level Committee has been authorized to operate CRF in accordance with the items and norms of assistance approved by the Government of India.

4. The State of Tamil Nadu has been allocated an amount of Rs. 230.51 crore in Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) for the year 2007-08 consisting of Rs. 172.88 crore as Central contribution and Rs. 57.63 crore as State contribution. Both the instalments of Central share of CRF amounting to Rs. 86.44 crore each have been released to the State Government on 11th September 2007 and 19th February 2008 respectively.

5. In addition, the Government of India has released in advance, the first instalment of Central share of CRF amounting to Rs. 90.76 crore for the year 2008-09 on 10th April 2008.